

Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

Historical Perspective

At the beginning of World War II the nation was worried about a Japanese invasion of the West Coast, therefore a number of military bases were established east of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and inland in the California and Nevada deserts.

One such base was the Army and Navy glider base “Condor Field,” which was located in the vicinity of what is now the “Main side” of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. After the war this base was abandoned.

In 1950, the country was embroiled in the Korean War and the need for live-fire training grew along with the swelling ranks of the Marine Corps. It became obvious that more ranges were needed. Camp Pendleton’s Marines looked toward the desert and discovered the abandoned former Navy and Army air field.

On August 20, 1952, Camp Pendleton Base Headquarters issued Post Order 343, and Marine Corps Training Center, Twentynine Palms, California was born.

Only 70 Marines made up the initial detachment at the Training Center. The mission of this detachment was to prepare the new base for the arrival of permanent personnel. By mid-December of 1952 the first live-fire field exercise aboard the new base was conducted. This “FEX-1” conducted by 3rd Marine Division with assistance from the 12th Marines, gave the Marine Corps a glimpse of the facility’s potential, and was a foreshadowing of the large-scale combined-arms exercise for which the base is now famous.

The first permanent medical facility was the Marine Base Twentynine Palms Medical Dispensary established shortly after the base was opened in 1953.

It stayed a Medical Dispensary until 1974 when it was redesignated as Branch Hospital of Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton.

Finally in July 1988 it was designated as a command of its own as Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms, with Commander G. Russell Brown, MSC, USN, commanding. At this time plans were put into place to build a new modern building for the hospital to move into.

The new hospital was completed in 1993 under the command of Captain John Yauch, MC, USN, and staff were able to move out of the old building into a modern state-of-the-art hospital in July 1993.

The hospital then went through its very first Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations attaining accreditation with a score of 93, under the command of Captain Carl S. Chitwood, MSC, USN.

On May 2, 2000, under command of Captain Joan M. Huber, NC, USN, the hospital was renamed as the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital for Robert E. Bush, Medal of Honor recipient. sixty years to the day of this ceremony, Bush, then an 18-year old Hospital Corpsman, was on patrol with a Marine rifle company on Okinawa. Though seriously wounded, receiving grenade wounds to the back, stomach and arm and losing one eye, he continued to provide medical aide to his Marine Corps patient while at the same time successfully fighting off several charging Japanese soldiers.

In 2001, under the command of Captain Lynda A. Salmond, MSC, USN, the Naval Hospital opened its own barracks for bachelor enlisted staff. One year later this barracks received the Silver Pineapple Award and was named a Five Star Zumwalt Award winner, the only Navy Medicine barracks on the West Coast at the time to win such honors.

In November 2003 the Hospital Bachelor Enlisted Quarters were rededicated as Carson Hall in honor of the hospital’s late Command Master Chief HMCM (SS) Craig D. Carson, deceased (August 23, 1999 to 23 August 2002.) Master Chief Carson was a prime mover in ensuring the barracks was furnished in such a way as to dramatically improve the quality of life for “his Sailors.”

The Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital will continue its mission of assuring force health protection, quality care and service to its community, as the nation, the Navy and the Marine Corps carry the fight to the war on terrorism.

Former Commanding Officers



Commander G. Russell Brown, MSC, USN
July 1988 - July 1992



Captain John Yauch, MC, USN
July 1992 - July 1993



Captain Carl S. Chitwood, MSC, USN
July 1993 - July 1996



Captain Robert S. Kayler, MSC, USN
July 1996 - August 1998



Joan M. Huber, NC, USN
August 1998 - November 2000



Captain Lynda A. Salmond, MSC, USN
November 2000 - November 2003



Former Command Master Chiefs

Photo
Not
Available

HCMC George Wilson
July 1988 - July 1993

Photo
Not
Available

HCMC Ron Lubitz
July 1993 - 22 June 1995

Photo
Not
Available

HCMC Clifton L. Howard
22 June 1995 - 16 September 1996



HCMC Dennis Preston
16 September 1996 - 12 September 1997



HMCN (SW) Robert Bettis
20 June 1997 - 10 June 1999



HMCN (SS) Craig D. Carson
23 August 1999 - 23 August 2002



HMCN (SW/FMF) Stephen Mitchell
23 August 2002 - 1 August 2004

